

MassCALL Principles of Program Adaptation

Effective implementation requires a thorough analysis of at least six major factors.

- 1) *Resources* (e.g. access to qualified staff and program materials)
- 2) *Target population* (e.g. cultural relevance, willingness to accept the new program)
- 3) *Organizational climate* (e.g. buy-in of key organizational leaders, favorable history with similar prevention efforts)
- 4) *Community climate* (e.g. fit with existing prevention efforts, willingness to accept the new program)
- 5) *Evaluability* (e.g. baseline data available)
- 6) *Future sustainability* (e.g. positive image in the community, strong program advocate or spokesperson)

After analyzing these factors, you should follow the guidelines below before making any changes to the program.

Change capacity before changing program. When there is less than a perfect fit between program requirements and your organization's capacity to meet those requirements, it is preferable to consider building your capacity before you consider modifying the program. For example, if the program consists of 20 sessions and it appears that your current financial resources will only support 15 sessions, it is preferable to seek additional resources rather than reduce the number of program sessions. Another example - the program you have chosen uses intensive small-group work as a delivery mechanism. Your staff is inexperienced in this method. It would be preferable to increase your staff capacity to lead small groups rather than to transform the program curriculum into a more didactic model.

Maintain core elements. When you implement a program, remember that you will be more likely to be successful if you maintain the core elements of the original intervention. These include the basic program structure (e.g., number of sessions, setting), content (e.g., inclusion of certain types of skill-building activities), and delivery (e.g., teacher training).

Be consistent with science-based principles. If you choose to adapt a program, you will have a greater likelihood of success if your adaptation does not violate basic science-based prevention *principles*. For example, if you choose to adapt a program that contains a peer leadership component, it is important to consider retaining this element as there is considerable evidence of the effectiveness of these approaches. A listing of science-based principles can be found in "Science-Based Practices in Substance Abuse Prevention: A Guide" that can be accessed at <http://www2.edc.org/capt/csap/papers/gardner-cover.asp>.